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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN COURT REJECTS LEGAL ATTACK ON BLOGS

REF: A. CAIRO 1487
[B.](#) CAIRO 489

Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

[¶1.](#) (U) On December 29, the Cairo Administrative Judicial Court dismissed a lawsuit aimed at shutting down 51 websites belonging to Egyptian human rights organizations, opposition groups and individual bloggers. As a legal basis for its ruling, the Cairo court cited Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, along with Articles 47 and 48 of Egypt's Constitution. (Note: Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads as follows: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. End note.)

[¶2.](#) (SBU) A senior judge in Alexandria, Abdel Fatah Murad, filed the lawsuit in May 2007, apparently in a personal capacity (ref A). Murad reportedly was angered by blog entries and a subsequent lawsuit accusing him of plagiarizing portions of a legal text he wrote. Murad could appeal the court's ruling.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) Bloggers and human rights groups responded quickly and positively to the ruling. Well known Egyptian blogger "Sandmonkey" called the ruling a "victory for freedom of speech." The Hisham Mubarak Law Center, a human rights organization whose website was targeted by the lawsuit, immediately issued a statement labeling the ruling a "gift" from Egypt's judiciary to the "cause of freedom of expression." One of the group's lawyers told us that he was especially gratified - and surprised - that the Cairo court was willing to rule against a fellow judge. He also noted the court's reliance on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and said that, as far as he knew, this is the first time an Egyptian court has used international human rights law to justify a ruling. A self-described apolitical blogger whose site was also a target of the lawsuit told us that while the lawsuit had scared her, she now is optimistic about the future of Egypt's blogging community.

[¶4.](#) (SBU) One blogger from Alexandria reminded us that this ruling does nothing to address the conviction and imprisonment of fellow blogger Abdel Karim Nabil Soliman, currently serving a four-year prison sentence for allegedly offensive web postings (ref B). Nonetheless, while Egyptian bloggers and journalists face pressures from the government, it is difficult to interpret the court's decision in this case as anything but a victory for freedom of expression.
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